

Fumble and the Fairies

Adapted from The Bee Who Would Not Work by Charlotte Herr
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Fumble and the Fairies

Running Time: 70-75 minutes

CAST: 17; (3 female, 2 male, 12 male or female; extras possible)

Bees

Fumble (m) *not* a worker-bee; a dancing bee

Queenie (f) yes, the Queen

Grumbly (m/f) grumbles but works

Rumply(m/f) a bit rumped but works

Snuggly (m/f) a cozy, sleepy bee who works

Bubbly (m/f) the always bubbly, optimistic bee

Sunny (m/f) a very cheery bee who *loves* to work

(extras possible)

Flutterby (f) a butterfly who loves to dance

Murrel (m/f) a squirrel

Fairies

Pennyroyal (f) the Queen (in charge)

Basil (m) the King (a bit vain)

Sorrel (m/f) moody

Dilly (m/f) dreamer

Verbena (m/f) a rule-follower

Chervil (m/f) exacting

Fennel (m/f) deep-thinker

Woodruff (m/f) intellectual

(extras possible)

PLACE: Anyplace where bees, butterflies and fairies gather (woodlands, garden, meadows, etc.). And the twilight – where the fairies go at night and in the winter.

TIME: Today, May through November

COSTUMES:

BEES: just wings and a vest (you may change the color and description of the vest in the script to suit your needs).

SQUIRREL: The tail will do. If you want a furry baseball cap, that's fine.

BUTTERFLY: Wings

FAIRIES: Anything goes

Fumble and the Fairies

SCENE 1: A May Morning

AT RISE we are where bees gather. QUEENIE is supervising while the bees work. FUMBLE sort of works. SUNNY is enjoying the sugary nectar.

QUEENIE

Excellent my worker-bees! Gather the nectar.

SUNNY

Sooooo good. Soooo sweet.

BUBBLY

I know! *I know!*

SUNNY

It makes me want to twirl!

BUBBLY

Swirl!

SUNNY

Fly!

BUBBLY

Climb!

SUNNY

And do nose dives into the flowers.

(BUBBLY does a nose-dive. Into the ground.)

QUEENIE

Maybe you two have had enough nectar. Yes, no more sugar for you. Find the pollen. Get some protein into your bodies.

SUNNY

But/

QUEENIE

Pollinate! That's an order.

BUBBLY

Pollinating is so tricky. I always slide into the flower.

QUEENIE

Don't lean forward so much and grip with your legs! That's why they're there.

(SUNNY and BUBBLY fly to some flowers.)

SUNNY

I prefer the nectar!

GRUMBLY

They always clean out the nectar. Nothing left for me. A drop here. A drop there. Those two are nothing but sugar bandits!

QUEENIE

I agree, Grumbly. You could do with a little more sweetness.

GRUMBLY

Is that an insult?

QUEENIE

Just a suggestion. Fumble? Are you getting any work done?

FUMBLE

Kind of. Sort of. Maybe.

GRUMBLY

He's the laziest bee on the planet!

QUEENIE

Grumbly, find nectar now!

GRUMBLY

(Flying away, grumbling.)

I can't have too much you know. I'm watching my weight.

(QUEENIE approaches RUMPLY and SNUGGLY.)

RUMPLY

I love today. Of course, I loved yesterday. I am sure I will love tomorrow. Love spring. Love flowers. Love nectar. Love/

SNUGGLY

/Rumply, stop chattering. I'm trying to meditate.

RUMPLY

I'd get up and work if I were you. Queenie's coming. I knew I should have combed my hair.

QUEENIE

Rumply, Your vest is inside out. Snuggly, stand up straight and pollinate! Go from flower to flower and distribute the pollen so we have flowers in the years to come.

(All but QUEENIE fly away.)

QUEENIE

They have quite exhausted me. Back to the hive. A Queen's work is never done.

(As QUEENIE exits, FUMBLE peeks out. Noting that everyone is gone, he enters with a beach towel, or a beach chair, sunglasses and some sunscreen. After applying some sunscreen – maybe to the wings, FUMBLE lies or sits down to catch some rays. MIURREL enters.)

MURREL

Busy... busy. Must eat. This is the fat season where I eat and eat and – well, look at you! Lying around while everyone works.

FUMBLE

I worked ... a little bit. And I'll work some more. But you know, this is the perfect spring day. One should get a little bit of enjoyment out of life, don't you think?

MURREL

Don't come to me when you're skinny and cold and begging for acorns. For me, this is the feasting season. It's spring and is all right with the world.

(MURREL exits as FLUTTERBY flutters by.)

FUMBLE

I don't eat acorns! I'm a bee!

FLUTTERBY

Woe is me. I want to dance with the fairies but none of the other butterflies will accompany me. Am I so pathetic? So low in everyone's esteem that I cannot find a dancing partner? Oh! A bee! Can bees dance?

(She approaches FUMBLE.)

FLUTTERBY (cont'd)

Hello Bee. I'm Flutterby. A butterfly. Will you dance with me?

FUMBLE

Hello, Flutterby-the-butterfly. I'm Fumble. I'd love to dance with you but...

FLUTTERBY

You find me clumsy, downtrodden, pathetic and don't want to.

FUMBLE

No, that's not it.

FLUTTERBY

You find me not worthy, not accomplished, not worth your time.

FUMBLE

No!

FLUTTERBY

Why is it no one will dance with me? Am I such a lowly insect, - an insect that does not pollinate as efficiently as bees - but that is because of our make-up. We have no say in the matter. Your bodies pick up more pollen than ours/

FUMBLE

/Flutterby! I don't know how to dance./

FLUTTERBY

/Did you not see me try to gather pollen in the - what?

FUMBLE

I don't know how to dance.

FLUTTERBY

... would you ... like to learn? You see, I have been invited to dance with the fairies this summer but I don't have a partner/

FUMBLE

/Fairies? You dance with fairies?

FLUTTERBY

Not yet.

FUMBLE

I think I would love to dance with the fairies. If I could dance.

FLUTTERBY

Would you like me to teach you? Not that I'm terribly good at it. But I do like dancing.

FUMBLE

I would love it.

FLUTTERBY

Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! He wants to dance with me! Someone will dance with me!

(She dances a waltz – or something by herself in her excitement and then stops short.)

Oh! Pardon me! Shall I give you a dancing lesson?

(And FLUTTERBY teaches FUMBLE. Any dance of your choosing. It could be the cha-cha, a waltz, a tango, etc. FUMBLE’S certainly a bit clumsy but very game.)

FUMBLE

I’m dancing! Dancing!

FLUTTERBY

Sort of.

(And they dance off as the FAIRIES dance on.)

PENNYROYAL

A perfect spot for our midsummer dances.

BASIL

The flowers will be in awe of my majestic movements.

SORREL

I don’t know. It looks like a weasel tunneled here. We could sprain an ankle.

DILLY

Oh Sorrel! Don’t be so gloomy. We could teach the weasel to dance!

SORREL

In your dreams.

DILLY

I love my dreams.

VERBENA

If the King and Queen say we dance here, then we dance here.

CHERVIL

Absolutely. And we must map out exactly where our dance floor is to be. This way, nobody will get lost in the woods.

VERBENA

What an excellent idea. Shall we take measurements?

CHERVIL

(Taking out a large tape measure.)

I thought you'd never ask.

FENNEL

We must be aware of the weather patterns. For beautiful dancing cannot happen in the mud.

WOODRUFF

True. We must check the clouds every hour, At present, I only see cirrus clouds which are very high up at about 18,000 feet and not likely to rain on us. We must keep a lookout for the large, puffy cumulonimbus clouds. They are most likely to produce rain and certainly dampen our spirits.

FENNEL

How do you know that stuff?

WOODRUFF

Wikipedia.

PENNYROYAL

Shall we have a short practice session?

BASIL

Can you keep up with me?

PENNYROYAL

Let's show them how it's done.

(BASIL and PENNYROYAL begin a short dance.)

SORREL

I love how graceful they are. I fear I will never be so.

DILLY

You can do anything if you put your mind to it. Shall we?

(And they dance.)

VERBENA

That's a new dance. So, it's just this step and that step and this step, correct?

CHERVIL

Actually Verbena, it's *that* step and *this* step and *that* step. Shall we?

(And they dance.)

FENNEL

They glide in such a rhythmic fashion. I feel if I could become one with the movements, I will be able to do this dance.

WOODRUFF

Dance is nothing more than moving rhythmically to music in a series of steps. Like so.

(WOODRUFF dances and FENNEL joins WOODRUFF. The FAIRIES dance off.)

Lights change.

SCENE 2: Later that Evening

MURREL enters very busy.

MURREL

I found a chestnut tree! My very own chestnut tree! I buried fifteen chestnuts and ate twelve. Oh the berries! Oh the bird seed! Oh the plants! I love spring. I can hardly wait for acorn season.

(QUEENIE enters.)

QUEENIE

Murrel, have you seen Fumble?

MURREL

Fumble was here this morning, lying in the sun as usual. Maybe he actually went to do some work.

QUEENIE

May-be.

MURREL

I'm off. I found a chestnut tree! It fills me with joy. You should really have your bees pollinate it so I can have it forever and ever.

QUEENIE

We don't pollinate chestnut trees....

MURREL

Your loss.

(MURREL exits. BEES enter.)

SUNNY

I pollinated tulips, heather and lavender.

BUBBLY

I pollinated the crabapple trees!

QUEENIE

I hope nobody went near the azaleas.

RUMPLY

Oh no! Their nectar makes us sick. I did find some wildflowers to pollinate.

GRUMBLY

Brag, brag, brag. I just worked.

QUEENIE

You didn't have any nectar today, did you Grumbly?

GRUMBLY

I told you, I'm watching my weight.

SNUGGLY

I made some honey. Not a lot but it makes the hive so cozy and sweet.

RUMPLY

I fell in the honey.

SNUGGLY

What?

RUMPLY

Sorry.

QUEENIE

I'm proud of all of you my busy-bees. We're missing just one bee.

GRUMBLY

Fumble. Fumble never works.

(FUMBLE dances in.)

FUMBLE

Look everyone. I'm dancing.

(And FUMBLE twirls and twirls and twirls and passes out. The BEES surround FUMBLE.)

QUEENIE

Fumble?

FUMBLE

Yes.

QUEENIE

What's the matter?

FUMBLE

I don't know.

GRUMBLY

Too much dancing. Not enough work.

FUMBLE

But dancing makes my heart happy.

GRUMBLY

Dancing makes the hive empty.

BUBBLY

I'd like to dance.

BEES

What?

BUBBLY

After work, of course.

RUMPLY

But you get all sweaty and then your vest isn't straight and your hairs are all messy.

GRUMBLY

Kind of like what you look like now, Rumply.

RUMPLY

Awww ... don't hurt my feelings.

SUNNY

You're perfect just the way you are.

SNUGGLY

I think I'll lie down and take a nap also.

QUEENIE

Nobody is napping! Take advantage of the longer evening and pollinate, my bees!
Pollinate!

(ALL BEES fly away except for FUMBLE.)

QUEENIE

And that goes for you too, my dancing bee.

FUMBLE

Aye, Aye, Your Highness!

(FUMBLE begins to fly and then decides to dance off.)

QUEENIE

Something tells me I'm never going to get a day's work out of that bee.

LIGHTS CHANGE

SCENE 3: June

AT RISE we are at the Fairy Dance. All are dancing including FUMBLE and FLUTTERBY who are now dancing quite well. QUEENIE enters with MURREL.

MURREL

Over there.

QUEENIE

Thanks, Murrel. Here you go. As promised.

(QUEENIE hands MURREL some honey sticks.)

Now, don't bury them. The ants will eat them. There're no preservatives. Eat them now.

MURREL

I just love honey sticks. Thanks, Your Royal Queenie.

(MURREL EXITS.)

QUEENIE

FUMBLE!

(Music stops. ALL freeze.)

FUMBLE

Uh-oh. (Beat.) Care to dance?

QUEENIE

Fumble, I need you to leave right now and do some pollinating. If you don't, there will be no honey waiting for you when you return.

FLUTTERBY

Fumble can't leave. Who will I dance with?

FUMBLE

I can't leave Flutterby without a dancing partner. I'm obligated.

QUEENIE

To me. You're obligated to me.

PENNYROYAL

If you stay Fumble, I can promise you dewdrops for drinking and peaseblossoms for eating.

DILLY

I love peaseblossoms!

FUMBLE

That does sound tempting.

QUEENIE

Your choice. But remember – no honey for you. I'm off. Somebody has to get the work done.

(QUEENIE exits.)

FLUTTERBY

Thank-you for sticking by me.

FUMBLE

Shucks, it was nothing.

BASIL

I declare that I am worn out from dancing and need to eat. Perhaps some honeysuckle juice to ensure I get enough sleep to remain as handsome as I am. And of course, some milk for my wonderful cheekbones....

DILLY

I churned some butter from the milk this morning. It's perfect for Woodruff's honey bread!

FUMBLE

Honey bread?

WOODRUFF

It's nothing. Just a little yeast, water, ½ cup of honey and 5 cups of flour.

CHERVIL

But the water must be warm!

WOODRUFF

That goes without saying.

SORREL

Can we not discuss recipes and go to our garden to feast?

FENNEL

Which garden? The rose garden? Or the wildflower garden?

DILLY

I put everything in the rose garden.

VERBENA

Then we must hurry before the birds find our picnic and eat it all!

PENNYROYAL

Dance to the rose garden, my fairies. Dance!

FUMBLE

Am ... I invited?

PENNYROYAL

But of course. You and Flutterby are our newest friends.

VERBENA

Stick with us Fumble, and you'll never have to work again.

FUMBLE

I'm liking the sound of that.

PENNYROYAL

Dance!

(And they all dance off.)

SCENE 3: July

AT RISE MURREL is eating a chestnut.

MURREL

Ahh the chestnut tree! The gift that just keeps giving.

(SUNNY and BUBBLY fly in.)

SUNNY

Hi, Murrel! It's so good to see you. The Queen has sent us on a mission to find Fumble. Have you seen him?

MURRELL

Can't say that I have.

BUBBLY

I hope Fumble's all right! It's been weeks since he returned to the hive.

MURREL

Probably dancing. Fumble is the laziest bee I've ever known.

SUNNY

Dancing is work!

MURREL

Dancing does not produce anything.

BUBBLY

It produces fun.

MURREL

All well and good but you cannot eat “fun.” Now chestnuts – that’s the way to go. Care for one?

BUBBLY

Bees don’t eat chestnuts.

MURREL

So I’ve heard.

SUNNY

We’re back to our mission. Have a sunny-honey day!

(BUBBLY and SUNNY fly off. RUMPLY and SNUGGLY enter.)

RUMPLY

Have you seen Fumble?

MURREL

Not in a month. Rumply, your vest is inside out.

SNUGGLY

I’ll help you. Oh it’s so warm and comfy.

RUMPLY

Because it’s July and it’s getting hot out. Thanks for the help, Snuggly.

SNUGGLY

I like to help. It makes me feel all cozy inside. We’d best be off.

(They collide. Maybe.)

RUMPLY

Which way?

SNUGGLY

That-a-way!

(THEY exit as GRUMBLY enters.)

GRUMBLY

Murrel! Have/

MURREL

No, I haven't seen Fumble and I'm tired of answering that question.

GRUMBLY

What's the matter with you?

(And GRUMBLY flies off. Offstage we hear PENNYROYAL.)

PENNYROYAL'S VOICE

Dance! Fairies dance!

MURREL

Can't a squirrel eat a chestnut in peace?

(MURREL exits as the FAIRIES, FUMBLE and FLUTTERBY dance on.)

FUMBLE

Dancing is exhausting!

FLUTTERBY

Oh no! You're tired of me. You don't want me for a partner anymore!

FUMBLE

No! It's not that. I'm just tired. Dancing is harder than pollinating.

PENNYROYAL

But a lot more fun.

BASIL

Why, you are in better shape than you've ever been. You almost look as fit as me. You've lost your belly fat.

FUMBLE

I had belly fat?

BASIL

It's fine. It's just your nature as a bee.

FUMBLE

I didn't think I had belly fat.....

SORREL

Face it, Fumble. Bees are not as fit as fairies.

WOODRUFF

They can't help it. They carry a molecule in their body that lets them store protein reserves. That's how they live through the winter.

FUMBLE

I do? I mean, yes, of course I do.

DILLY

I think it's an admiral trait.

FUMBLE

Thank-you. Although I didn't choose to have this protein-fat-molecule. It's just part of my make-up.

VERBENA

Isn't it in your make-up to pollinate?

FUMBLE

Yes. I do miss my friends. Most of them. Some of them. All of them – except Grumbly -when he/she grumbles. All right, I even miss Grumbly.

FENNEL

We would understand if you want to go back to them.

FLUTTERBY

I wouldn't!

CHERVIL

A bee needs to do what a bee needs to do.

PENNYROYAL

What *would* you like to do?

FUMBLE

I'd like – to dance! I know I should also work. I'll go back to them in August.

PENNYROYAL

Sounds like a plan. And now – we dance!

(The FAIRIES, FLUTTERBY and FUMBLE dance off.)

SCENE 4: August

“Song of the Volga Boatmen” or another song invoking drudgery and work could be heard. QUEENIE flies in followed by her weary bees. It is so hot, even QUEENIE is not her chirpy self.

QUEENNIE

Pollinate ... my busy ... bees.

GRUMBLY

The sweat’s dripping into my eyes. It’s hard to see.

BUBBLY

Welcome to August.

SNUGGLY

I think it’s naptime.

QUEENIE

We just got up. Rumply, your vest’s inside-out.

RUMPLY

It’s too hot to wear a vest.

QUEENIE

Bees! Pay attention. (Beat.) I lost my train of thought.

SNUGGLY

You were about to command us to nap.

QUEENIE

No, that’s not it. The sunflowers are out. The Black-Eyed Susans have appeared. The world is in bloom. We must make honey while the sun shines. Be off with you, my honey bees and pollinate.

SUNNY

Black-eyed Susan nectar is my all time favorite!

GRUMBLY

Leave some nectar for me!

QUEENIE

There’s plenty to go around. Now, scatter yourselves.

(And they exits. FUMBLE enters – tired and hot.)

QUEENIE (cont’d)

Fumble!

FUMBLE

Hi, Queenie!

QUEENIE

Excuse me?

FUMBLE

I mean Your Royal Queeniness.

QUEENIE

That's a little better. The summer is ending fast. Have you decided to return to work?

FUMBLE

That was my intention but/

QUEENIE

/no buts.

FUMBLE

It's hot.

QUEENIE

So, I've been told.

FUMBLE

I'll go to work when the sun starts to set. It will be much cooler.

QUEENIE

We are not above one hundred degrees. You are able to work.

FUMBLE

Even when it's ninety out?

QUEENIE

Even when it's ninety.

FUMBLE

After I get some water. I'm parched.

QUEENIE

Very well. Find some water, refresh yourself and *get to work!*

(QUEENIE exits as FLUTTERBY enters.)

FLUTTERBY

Fumble! I've been looking all over for you! The fairies were dancing in the meadow and I had no dancing partner. Have you forgotten me?

FUMBLE

I'm torn – I should be working with my bees. They're my tribe-hive. Summer is half over and I haven't done my part.

FLUTTERBY

But what about me? Your truest, bluest friend? Am I to be cast away? Thrown to the wind?

FUMBLE

Of course not! What to do? One the one wing, I have a duty to my bees. We are all for one and one for all. On the other wing, Flutterby has been a good friend, taught me to dance and introduced me to the fairies. I have had a magical summer. *I'm conflicted!*

(The FAIRIES enter. A little woebegone and very hot.)

PENNYROYAL

Shall ... we ... dance?

ALL OTHER FAIRIES

No!

PENNYROYAL

Thank goodness. Oh. Hello Flutterby. Good Morning, Fumble. Back to work?

FUMBLE

I'm conflicted!

SORREL

I'm hot. I'd rather be conflicted.

FLUTTERBY

Fumble doesn't want to be my dancing partner anymore.

FUMBLE

I didn't say that. I said, "I'm conflicted."

VERBENA

It's too hot for conflict. On days like today, it's best to conserve your energy.

WOODRUFF

On days like to today, I recommend eight thimbles of berry juice. It's important to stay hydrated.

FENNEL

But the berries are drying up.

WOODRUFF

A spinach smoothie then. It is a good source of Vitamin A, Vitamin K, potassium and iron.

BASIL

Oh not that dreary spinach again. It turns my skin green.

CHERVIL

I agree. One thimbleful will be enough.

PENNYROYAL

Shall we retire to a mossy glade and rest until the heat breaks?

WOODRUFF

A storm is brewing. The dew point will go down ten points and the temperatures will break.

BASIL

How do you know these things?

WOODRUFF

Weather underground.

FLUTTERBY

Coming, Fumble?

FUMBLE

I'm going to do some pollinating. At least, that's the plan.

FLUTTERBY

But who will I dance with?

PENNYROYAL

Don't be a bird brain. Nobody's dancing in this heat.

(The FAIRIES exit.)

FUMBLE

Sooooo, here I goooooo.

(FUMBLE starts to work.)

Sooooo, here I stay.

(FUMBLE stops.)

Woodruff said this heat is going to break soon. I'll conserve my energy and work harder. Later. After the heat breaks.

(FUMBLE gets ready for a nap. Thunder is heard.)

Uh oh.

BLACKOUT

The sound of a downpour.

FUMBLE (in the blackout)

No work today.

SCENE 5: September

AT RISE MURREL dances on with acorns.

MURREL

It's September! Acorn season! I must eat and bury some. I must remember where I buried them and eat some more. *I love September!* Forever, September. Remember September, Murrel the Squirrel savors September.

(QUEENIE enters.)

QUEENIE

You're a happy squirrel!

MURREL

Whenever it's September. Acorn season sings!

QUEENIE

It's a busy time. Must make more honey for the hives. Did you know that some hives eat thirty pounds of honey in the winter?

MURREL
No wonder you all get fat.

QUEENIE
Trust me, fat is good for the winter.

MURREL
Care for an acorn?

QUEENIE
No, thank-you. Bees don't eat acorns.

MURREL
I keep forgetting. It's time to bury some. And eat some. And hide some. And feast on them! Later.

(MURREL exits. As the BEES enter.)

SNUGGLY
Astilbe!

RUMPLY
Larkspur!

BUBBLY
Shrub roses!

GRUMBLY
I don't love shrub roses.

BEES
What?

GRUMBLY
Too sweet.

SNUGGLY
But they're soft. And Snuggly.

SUNNY
Oh Snuggly. You're so predictable.

(FUMBLE runs on.)

FUMBLE

Am I late?

GRUMBLY

About four months late.

FUMBLE

Never fear, Fumble is here. I will make up for the last four months by pollinating like a champ.

QUEENIE

The days are shorter.

FUMBLE

So, I'll have to work fast.

QUEENIE

If you say so.

FUMBLE

I do!

QUEENIE

The dahlias are in full bloom.

FUMBLE

Got it.

QUEENIE

And stay away from the hydrangeas. It's a waste of time. Their flowers are sterile and there is no nectar.

FUMBLE

Will do!

(FUMBLE exits.)

QUEENIE

Miracle of miracles. It looks like Fumble is finally going to work. Time to pollinate! We lost an hour of sunlight in August.

(The BEES exit as the FAIRIES and FLUTTERBY enter.)

FLUTTERBY

Where can Fumble be?

PENNYROYAL

Don't fret. Maybe Fumble decided to go back to being a bee.

FLUTTERBY

Woe is me. I lost my dancing partner. I'll never dance again.

VERBENA

Maybe we can look for him and see if he would do one last dance with you?

FLUTTERBY

Would you? Could you?

PENNYROYAL

An excellent idea, Verbena. We shall search high and low and find Fumble.

BASIL

Over hill, over dale...

SORREL

We shall hit the mossy trail.

CHERVIL

As the fairies go searching along.

FENNEL

In the storm -

WOODRUFF

In the night -

BASIL

Flying left, flying right -

ALL

Watch us fairies go searching along.

(FAIRIES exit as FUMBLE enters.)

FUMBLE

I cannot find a dahlia anywhere. I don't even know what a dahlia looks like. Sounds like I was sent on a wild goose chase for something that doesn't exist.

(MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Hello, Fumble. Look at my stash! Have you ever seen such delectable acorns?

FUMBLE

They're – okay. Not really into acorns.

MURREL

More for me.

FUMBLE

Murrel, do you know what a dahlia looks like?

MURREL

Of course! I am a botany expert. Didn't you know that?

FUMBLE

No, I'm sorry. I thought you were just a squirrel.

MURREL

Just like a bee! Doesn't try to get to know you. Doesn't offer to share honey. Doesn't understand that squirrels have a deep intellect. Just in it for them/

FUMBLE

Murrel! Please show me a dahlia.

MURREL

It's staring at you.

FUMBLE

What? Is there a predator about?

MURREL

The dahlia. Turn around. It's watching you. Be kind. It's a beautiful flower.

(MURREL exits.)

FUMBLE

Thank-you. (Stares at dahlia.) It's quite big, isn't it? It will take a long time to pollinate that.

PENNYROYAL (Offstage voice.)

Fum-ble! Do you want to go danc-ing?

BASIL (Offstage voice)

Fum-ble? Where arrrre you?

FUMBLE

Do you hear that? They want to dance with me. And it's a perfect day. Not too hot. Not too cold. On the one wing, I promised Queenie that I would pollinate the dahlias. On the other wing, I shouldn't abandon Flutterby. What's a bee to do?

BUBBLY (Offstage voice.)

Ohhh, Fum-ble! We neeeeed you.

FUMBLE

I'm going to be a worker bee. I am going to pollinate. Watch. I will be the champion of pollinators. You'll see. Maybe. I think. Yes, I must think.

(FUMBLE sits by or in the dahlia to ponder.
FUMBLE falls asleep. There's a snore.)

Lights fade to black.

Optional intermission.

SCENE 6: September later that day.

AT RISE FUMBLE is sound asleep in or next to the dahlia. A snore is heard.

BUBBLY and SUNNY enter.

BUBBLY

We must find Fumble.

SUNNY

I know! There's talk of Fumble being kicked out of the hive. I would not like that.

BUBBLY

Fumble's a good sort. Cheery, silly, an asset to the hive.

SUNNY

Nobody else thinks so.

BUBBLY

It's tough being a bee. Sometimes we get our nose out of joint. It's from working so hard. Flutter, flutter flutter!

SUNNY

Pollinate, pollinate, pollinate!

BUBBLY

Where could Fumble be?

(A snore is heard.)

SUNNY

Fumble!

BUBBLY

We found you!

(Amid snorts and snores, FUMBLE wakes up.)

FUMBLE

Don't judge.

SUNNY

Fumble, you have to start pollinating. We don't have enough honey for all of us to survive the winter.

BUBBLY

They won't let you in the hive when the cold weather comes if you don't produce your share of honey.

FUMBLE

I pollinated! At least, I think I pollinated. Maybe I dreamt it.

BUBBLY

Come back with us now and do your share. Please. Pretty please.

SUNNY

With a cherry on top?

FUMBLE

I like cherries.

BUBBLY

So, you'll come back with us? Before it's too late?

FUMBLE

I get exhausted from pollinating.

SUNNY

That's because you're out of shape. You haven't pollinated in two seasons.

FUMBLE

But I dance! I'm fit as a fiddle.

BUBBLY

It uses different muscles.

(FLUTTERBY rushes on.)

FLUTTERBY

Fumble! Have you abandoned me?

FUMBLE

I did no such thing. I was nap/ ... err pollinating. I'm a bee, you know.

SUNNY

Glad you remembered!

BUBBLY

Come with us!

FLUTTERBY

No! With me.

BUBBLY

Me!

FLUTTERBY

Me!

SUNNY

(Singing.) Mi, Mi, Mi, Mi, Mi!

BUBBLY

Why are you singing?

SUNNY

Someone needed to break the tension.

BUBBLY

Back to work. Fumble, are you coming?

FLUTTERBY

Fumble's coming with me!

FUMBLE

I can't take it anymore! I can't please everyone!

(FUMBLE runs off.)

FLUTTERBY

Would ... either of you like to dance with me?

SUNNY

Sorry, Flutterby.

BUBBLY

We have to work.

(SUNNY and BUBBLY exit.)

FLUTTERBY

My dancing days are over.

(FLUTTERBY exits as MURREL enters.)

MURREL

An acorn!

(MURREL picks up an acorn from the ground.)

Oh, acorn, how do I love thee? I have eaten so many of you today, I'm turning into a nut!

(Singing or chanting)

"I'm an acorn small and round,
Lying on the cold, cold ground.
Everyone walks over me,
That is why I'm cracked, you see.

I'm a nut! I'm a nut! I'm a nut!"

Dance break!

(MURREL dances with the acorn. After a few steps – or as long as you wish – FUMBLE peeks out.)

FUMBLE

Psst! Murrel!

MURREL

Don't interrupt. I'm dancing!

FUMBLE

Are they gone?

MURREL

No one here but me and my acorn.

FUMBLE

I'm under so much pressure.

MURREL

Don't make me laugh! All you've done is dance all summer. And spring. And soon-to-be fall.

FUMBLE

Can I ask you something?

MURREL

Ask away. I'm a philosopher, you know.

FUMBLE

I didn't.

MURREL

Of course not. You're a bee. Bees never try to get to know squirrels.

FUMBLE

What's it all about, Murrel?

MURREL

Never figured you for a deep thinker.

FUMBLE

Is it work? Is it play? Playing is more fun. Look at you! You do nothing but eat all summer.

MURREL

I bury nuts! Lots and lots of nuts!

FUMBLE

Why do you do that? You never remember where you buried them.

MURREL

That's why I have to bury a lot of them.

FUMBLE

Life, huh?

MURREL

Yeah ... life...

FUMBLE

It's short. And I want to experience everything. Maybe there's not enough time.

MURREL

Eating takes up most of my time. If I don't feast in the summer, I'll wither away in the winter. My friend Myrtle wants me to come and live in the city. She says if you live by a school there's food everywhere all the time – even in the winter. I guess that's true because she's a little chubby – even in the winter. Don't tell her I said that.

FUMBLE

My lips are sealed.

MURREL

But I like it here. The woods, the meadows, the ponds, the lakes, the trees, the flowers, the/

FUMBLE

Got it, Murrel. You love the country.

MURREL

I think what you need is balance. Work all day and then do a little dancing at night for fun.

FUMBLE

Bees just seem to work. I never knew a "fun-bee."

MURREL

You could change that.

FUMBLE

I could, couldn't I?

MURREL

It's never too late.

FUMBLE

You're all right, Murrel. For a rodent.

MURREL

You're not so bad yourself, Fumble. For a bee. With a stinger.

(The FAIRIES enter. They are carrying
FLUTTERBY on a makeshift fairy stretcher.)

FUMBLE

Oh no! Flutterby!

(FUMBLE peers in at FLUTTERBY.)

Are you alive?

FLUTTERBY

I think so.

FUMBLE

What happened?

PENNYROYAL

She was dancing in the meadow too close to the Farmer's land. Suddenly, the
squirters/

MURREL

/sprinklers/

PENNYROYAL

/whatever – sprouted up and sprayed water over her wings.

SORREL

They're soaked.

FENNEL

And you know what happens to butterflies when their wings are soaked.

WOODRUFF

They're grounded. They can't fly.

VERBENA

Farm fields are dangerous places.

FUMBLE

What were you thinking?

FLUTTERBY

I wasn't. I was just dancing by myself because I didn't have a partner...

FUMBLE

Awwww.... Flutterby....

BASIL

I do declare, the sun is starting to set and we must retire to our twilight home.
Mustn't lose beauty sleep.

PENNYROYAL

You'll stay with her, won't you, Fumble? Flutterby can't fly until her wings are dry.

FUMBLE

Of course.

BASIL

To the twilight!

(And the FAIRIES exit.)

MURREL

You're in a muddle. Can't pollinate. Can't go back to the hive.

FUMBLE

But I made the right choice, didn't I.

MURREL

Yeah, pal. You done good. I'm off. Got to find acorns while the going is good.

(MURREL exits.)

FLUTTERBY

Thanks, Fumble.

FUMBLE

You're welcome. Now try and sleep. (To audience.) What's a bee to do?

(The lights fade to black as FUMBLE attends to
FLUTTERBY.)